

STOP EMAIL MADNESS.



**10 WAYS TO
REDUCE EMAIL STRESS.**



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Quick — what are some words that come to mind when you think about your email inbox? Are they words you can say outloud in an office setting? Since the first email was sent in 1971, email has increasingly become the dominant way we communicate with one another. It's a quick way to reach out when we want, and gives the other person an opportunity to answer when they have time. And the inbox has become the de facto to do list, a constant stream of items to follow up on later.

Today, the average email user receives 147 messages every day, and spends more than two and a half hours on email a day. On average, we delete 71 of those, which takes under 5 minutes. Another 12 messages a day on average require substantial work, which take up almost 90 minutes a day. [Source: boomeranggmail.com]

How can we reduce the email stress that surrounds us? The team at FMYI [for my innovation] brings you this “**Stoplight Email**” top ten list to help you manage the flow of emails:

- 1. Avoid doing nothing.**
- 2. Think before writing an email.**
- 3. Have a system.**
- 4. Read and delete.**
- 5. Never file your inbox.**
- 6. Make it easy for your team.**
- 7. Give options for email alerts.**
- 8. Set email frequency.**
- 9. Create a shared inbox.**
- 10. Love thy inbox.**



1. Avoid doing nothing.

Don't let the short term ease of "no change" prevent you from fixing the problem. If you're not proactively controlling your stream of emails, it inevitably controls you and your time. Once you and others on your team agree there's an issue, work together to change things. You know that Albert Einstein quote? "Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." So what can you do to change? This brings us to #2:

2. Think before writing an email.

Take a second to think before replying or starting a new email thread. Would this be easier to resolve over the phone? Can you be specific with what you're asking for in the email and give the recipients a few options to choose from in your email to reduce the back and forth? Be sure to keep things as brief and clear as possible to lessen confusion. If the email has to be a little long, break up the text into paragraphs, bulleted lists, and a clear summary of what you're asking for from the recipient. And most of all, take breaks from email during the day to focus on projects.

3. Never file away emails.

It takes time to figure out what folder to file an email away — this can really add up each day. Instead, when you read the email, either deal with the email immediately if it's quick, or flag it to follow up at a later time. You can use your email program's search feature to find specific messages.

4. Have a system.

Most likely, you're working with a team of people. There are certain things you control with your own inbox, but you'll also need to figure out ways to help the entire team. The answer? It all begins with selecting a centralized system for the team that can help everyone reduce email. Why? Having a system keeps details organized and accessible to the right people so they can proactively retrieve information without any emails needing to be sent. For example, after a meeting, you can add notes to a central online location. Inevitably, someone will forget what was discussed, but instead of them needing to email you to ask, they can simply look it up. This is similar to the Facebook phenomenon — when you want to know what Cousin Joy has been up to, you can go to Facebook and see her latest updates, without getting emails all the time.



5. Read and delete.

Once you have a system, you can choose to get email alerts for certain things. The nice thing about email alerts is that you can read and delete them because they're all filed on the centralized system. Over the long term, this is a big time saver.

6. Give options for email alerts.

Be sure your team knows which projects you require email alerts about and which ones you don't need to be bothered with so you can complete your tasks. This will reduce the quantity of emails you receive. The system you use should be able to keep track of this for you, and make it clear to other users, which will take all of the guesswork out and make the "should I email" process dummy proof.

7. Set email frequency.

Do you get distracted by projects other than the one you're working on? Try to get all your important notifications in one email. You'll stay more focused throughout the day or week as important items are all in one email. But don't sacrifice your urgency! Emails marked urgent should still find their way through to you, as they contain important distractions. Get digest emails daily, weekly or never, unless you like your flow of emails at the speed of information. Your system should support all these personalized options.

8. Create a shared inbox.

Leverage the popularity of activity feeds on sites like Facebook and create a shared inbox for your team on the system you choose so everyone can sort and find the messages they need in a centralized way. This prevents someone from stressing out if they weren't copied on a key email — the shared inbox feed of posts to the centralized system enables them to look for information of interest across your team.



9. Make it easy for your team.

It takes a little work to launch a system. But as we touched upon in #1, when change is needed, you should go for it to enjoy the benefits. To reduce the barrier to entry, select a system that's intuitive and offers time saving features like the ability to reply to an email alert (your response goes out to the team and automatically gets saved in the system without you having to sign in), and free support to answer questions that come up along the way.

10. Love thy inbox.

Above all, remember to embrace your inbox and all the emails in as an effective way to manage your workflow. If you've implemented the nine tips above, you'll experience email bliss. Your inbox will finally become what it's most helpful for — high priority notifications for the things you're most interested in, and an efficient way to maximize team communications. Email as the dominant way to communicate within the workplace isn't going away soon. But by following these "**Stoplight Email**" tips, email madness and stress will soon be a thing of the past!



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FMYI [for my innovation] provides an online collaboration system that helps your team reduce email and keep everything organized and privately accessible to the right people. Please contact FMYI for more information about how our solution can help you reduce email stress and manage projects, track contacts, and share resources more effectively.